

# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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The central design of the Union's official seal is the Eastern Goldfinch, designated State Bird of Iowa in 1933.

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EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE  
WINTHROP, IOWA

## THE END OF A PERFECT BIRDING DAY

By CHARLES A. STEWART  
NEW ALBIN, IOWA

A little lake among the sloughs of the Mississippi, hidden deep in the woodlands—a bird picture from the warm and humid south—such was the picture that brought to an end a perfect birding day, late in the afternoon of September 10, 1949.

Upon arising that morning I felt possessed with the spirit of discovery of the early French voyageurs. I must find a place where I had never been. Incidentally this desire may have been prompted by the hope of seeing a Snowy Egret or a Little Blue Heron, birds that I had looked for all through the summer without success.

I was alone in my boat with only my outboard motor for a companion. Starting from a point in Minnesota and travelling south along the sloughs for about six miles into Iowa, I investigated the small bays and lakes as I travelled. This took up most of the morning. Late in the afternoon I came to a bay. I knew this bay as a good location for herons. It was well populated with egrets and Great Blues. A noteworthy observation was the large numbers of Great Blue Herons seen in immature plumage, indicating breeding reasonably close. At the end of this bay was what appeared to be a narrow creek entering the woods. Again the spirit of the voyageur acted — I must see where this creek led. Pushing the boat stern first, in order to see the birds rising in front, I entered. Here I picked up my guide. He was a little Green Heron that persisted in flying in front of the boat in jumps of 30 feet from one overhanging branch to another. At first he was not excited, sitting with his head between his shoulders, but as I followed he began extending his neck and raising his crest, meanwhile talking to me with a series of clucks.

Progress was slow. Several times I had to lie on my back to push the boat under the branches of a fallen tree. After a quarter-mile of this kind of travel an open place appeared in the trees and here was the "Little Lake of the Herons" well hidden in the woods.

Peering through the branches of the arched trees, I saw a vista of Florida—a small, round lake of about 30 acres, almost covered with the large tropical-appearing leaves of the American lotus. A band of bare earth surrounded the lake. Beyond this was a 200-foot rush and arrowhead swamp and then the deep green of the forest. Standing in the shallow water of the lake were many herons—a pattern of white blotched with blue gray—the American Egret and the Great Blue Heron. On a tree about 60 feet from my hiding place were two Black-crowned Night Herons, one in adult plumage and one in immature. On the band of bare earth were many white spots teetering up and down with here and there a darker spot that bobbed, the Spotted Sandpipers in their new fall white vest and one or two Solitary Sandpipers. At the far end of the lake were three Wood Ducks contentedly paddling around. Overhead a pair of Turkey Vultures lazily circled, their bare red heads emphasizing the impression of the southland. The harsh, screeching "ker-yoo" of the Red-shouldered Hawk as it circled over the trees penetrated this scene of quiet. So close to my hiding place that it was startling, came the hooting of a Barred Owl, and at the far end of the swamp flew a Marsh Hawk.

For more than an hour I sat still and watched this idyl of nature. While watching six Blue-winged Teal, a Mallard flew into the lake. To disturb this scene so emblematic of one of nature's moods, when peace and quiet predominate, would seem a sacrilege, but the thought that scanning the lake with

my glasses might disclose a Snowy Egret or Little Blue among the numerous herons, caused me to push my boat into the lake.

Then occurred the explosion. The Black-crowned Night Herons left their perch, the Barred Owl flew from the tree at the edge of the lake into the deeper woods, the ducks took flight and the Great Blue Herons started a squawking flight around the lake. The egrets, which are not nervous birds, looked up in surprise. The noise and excitement was too much for them and they joined the circling flight and added their squawks to the noise.

This was also too much for me, and since I did not find a Snowy Egret or Little Blue among the herons, I left the little lake to settle back into its accustomed quietude. I went out through the twisted creek by which I entered. Again I had my guide, the little Green Heron that flew before me to the bay.

The name of this woodland lake I know not. It is probably Mud Lake, Bullhead Lake or some other equally prosaic name. To me it will remain "The Little Lake of the Herons" nestled in the woods. I enjoy the memory of this scene that was like a breath from the southland transported to north-east Iowa.

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## SUBSPECIES AND BIRD WATCHING

By PHILIP A. DU MONT  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Two recent articles in *Iowa Bird Life* (Vol. 19, pp. 62-63 and 67-69) present complaints against use of subspecific names in recording field observations of birds — a practice which no one has advocated now for some time. Recent field guides, such as Peterson's, Pough's and Hausman's, omit subspecies entirely or relegate them to appendices.

Within the past few months this trend towards use of species names in recording all field identifications has received considerable impetus in both the United States and England. Two policy-forming articles in particular go beyond the proposal stage and call for concerted reporting on a species basis.

Bernard W. Tucker, Editor of the monthly publication "British Birds" (Vol. 42, Nos. 5, 6, 7), in presenting his three-part article on "Species and Subspecies: A Review for General Ornithologists", stated that: "There are good reasons for considering that a review of the concept of subspecies and the use and limitations of trinomial names in a publication circulating widely amongst field ornithologists is desirable at the present time, if not overdue. In the first place the nature of subspecies and of trinomial names is constantly misunderstood by field naturalists. The hazy or actually mistaken notions prevalent on the subject lead to a frequent misplacement of emphasis on subspecific distinctions and to the frequent use of subspecific names in contexts where they are at best inappropriate and at worst actually incorrect and misleading."

Mr. Tucker stated further that "the use of trinomial scientific names in *The Handbook of British Birds* and the present journal and in other standard works, as well as in most of the local ornithological reports, has led the majority of amateur observers, even if they do not carry the scientific names of the various species in their heads, to take them more or less for granted when they see them and indeed to use them habitually when publishing their observations. This taking for granted of what is in fact an essential instrument in the scientific study of animals is no doubt better than regarding it as a rather frightening and pointless jargon (a view more prevalent amongst amateurs formerly than now), but it may be suggested that there is now a



general tendency amongst field workers to take trinomial names too much for granted and to assume that their use is necessary and desirable in circumstances where in fact quite the reverse is the case."

In concluding his article, Mr. Tucker suggested that there is "a widespread impression amongst amateur ornithologists that subspecies are much more definite and clear-cut entities than in fact they are. It leads many people to suppose that subspecies are of comparable importance to species, and indeed to make no clear distinction between them as is evidenced by the comparative frequency with which in the writings of quite good and experienced field ornithologists forms which are in fact subspecies are referred to as species. This use of vernacular names for subspecies and the fact that trinomial names have until recently been generally used in this journal, as they still are in much field literature, has given subspecies an altogether inflated importance in the eyes of many field workers and has fostered an impression that a field record is somehow less valuable and less 'scientific' if it has not a trinomial name tacked on to it. In actual fact the reverse is frequently the case. The practice of distinguishing and naming subspecies was developed to facilitate the intensive study of geographical variation, which is the task of museum workers, and the vast majority of subspecies cannot possibly be distinguished in the field by even the most skilled observers. In the majority of cases, therefore, the attachment of a trinomial name to a field observation is either at worst a mere guess or at best a pure assumption based on geographical considerations and adds nothing to the value of the record."

A definite editorial policy concerning the use of common names for species was presented by Dr. John W. Aldrich in "Audubon Field Notes" (Vol. 4, pp. 36-39). Species names have now been in use in reporting Christmas Bird Counts for the past two years. Hereafter, all field observations will be recorded in "Audubon Field Notes" using species names unless there is sufficient basis for attaching the subspecific name in parenthesis directly following. To facilitate such a practise, a list of common names for species of North American birds was presented by Dr. Aldrich. Many of these have been tentatively accepted for use in the next A.O.U. Check-List, while the remainder, as yet unapproved, will probably prove acceptable by the time the Check-List is issued.

The use of common species names should be encouraged by the adoption in all state bird journals of an editorial policy, such as was presented by Dr. Aldrich. Such a policy would eliminate completely the hypothetical problem presented independently by Messrs. Fecney and Youngworth. It would further simplify recording field observations of perplexing Juncos (Iowa Bird Life, Vol. 19, pp. 72-73), by limiting the possible species to the Slate-colored, Oregon, Gray-headed, or White-winged Juncos. Sight records of the Shufeldt's, Montana, Pink-sided and Oregon Juncos would all be lumped as Oregon Juncos.

My "Revised List of the Birds of Iowa" is a publication that places principal emphasis on subspecies. In its defense, I should like to point out that it is a distributional list, rather than a popular guide; that identification of all but 5 of the 365 species and subspecies were based upon specimens (Wilson Bull. Vol. 47, pp. 205-208); and until recently common species names were unavailable.

The identification of specimens for subspecific determination in mapping breeding, migrant, and winter ranges should continue to be a responsibility of museum technicians. Whenever appropriate these findings should be included in "Iowa Bird Life."

Bird watching is fun. In most persons it arouses an interest to understand bird migration, feeding and nesting requirements, and measures by which these creatures may be protected. Iowa has already lost some of her most imposing species. The Passenger Pigeon, Wild Turkey, Paroquet, Whoop-

ing Crane, Trumpeter Swan, the Kites and Eskimo Curlew are all gone. The Prairie Chicken may be gone as a breeder. Others will follow unless an informed public fights for parks, sanctuaries, and protection by regulations. The goal of every bird watcher should be to gain knowledge that will permit an intelligent and firm stand in behalf of wildlife, and to exercise such rights whenever programs of endangerment are proposed. Consideration of wildlife values should be demanded before any impoundment, drainage or clearing plans are approved.

No park or sanctuary has been established, no bird or animal saved from extinction, or conservation measure enacted without a fight. To this end, bird watchers do have a responsibility.

## FROM THE OBSERVER'S NOTEBOOK

By WILLIAM YOUNG WORTH

SIoux CITY, IOWA

### ON THE GOSHAWK

Many years ago, while living on a homestead in the Laramie Mountains of Wyoming, I had numerous interesting experiences with birds, one of which is given below. As I was working down a small stream, trying to catch enough brook trout for a meal, a dark form hurtled by my head and struck at some object on the ground a short distance in front of me. Amid a great flopping of wings, I discerned a large hawk tearing the life from a good sized bird.

I hurried forward and as I did so, a large Goshawk disengaged its beak and talons from an adult Blue Grouse, and flew to a limb about 20 feet away, from which perch it eyed me without fear. I reached down, picked up the dying grouse and started to walk toward the hawk. The hawk didn't budge and watched me with baleful eyes as I walked under its perch. Fearing an attack, I dropped the grouse and began to wave my arms and shout. This was too much for the Goshawk and it flew to another tree, but continued to watch me until I moved around a bend in the creek and out of sight.

### A BLACKBIRD FLIGHT

One November, the observer was attending an important football game in the Morningside College stadium at Sioux City, when his attention to the thrilling action was distracted by a small flock of Red-winged Blackbirds winging over the playing field from northeast to southwest. This first flock was but the vanguard of a long, thin flock of blackbirds. Seldom was the flock wider than 25 or 30 feet, but it seemed endless. The continuous flock of birds wound its sinuous way over head, and they would veer to right or left and dip and lift much as a long black ribbon would perform in a breeze. The flight continued for nearly 15 minutes and was practically unbroken, as thousands of blackbirds passed over on the way south. The spectacle had been so unusual I lost track of the progress of the football game, and had to ask someone what the score was.

### MOURNING DOVE NOTES

The Mourning Dove is often quite a late nester and it is not unusual to see them feeding young in the fall. The latest nesting date I have in my files is an incubating bird on September 4. Incidentally several Blue Jays were observed harassing the female dove and trying to chase her from her nest so they could get the eggs.

Through the years, I have recorded quite a list of birds which sang during the night. I heard my first night-singing Mourning Dove last year. On the nights of August 4 and 5, 1949, under a full moon, a male Mourning Dove gave his full song or call from about 10 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Occasionally one reads that a bird's nest is used by the young birds only during the nidification period and they never return to it. This is probably true in most cases. Over a period of many years of observation, I have noted only one exception.

During August, 1948, we watched a pair of doves raise their young in a nest just a few feet from an upstairs window. Late one afternoon the two young doves became restless. They did considerable wing flopping and stretching. Finally the bolder of the two took off on his first flight. It flew rather well and landed in a pear tree about 25 feet from the nest. The second bird was more timid and left the nest by way of the pedestrian's route; it merely walked away from the nest, out along a branch for 4 or 5 feet. The other bird had meanwhile become tired of its perch and flew to the roof of a nearby tool-shed. It was now getting dusk and I watched carefully. Suddenly the flying dove took off from the roof and flew directly to the nest where it settled down. This was a signal to the walking dove, which proceeded to walk down the branch, climb into the nest and settle beside its nest mate for the night. Next morning the two young doves flew from the nest and stayed down in the garden all day. Toward evening both of them flew back to the nest but did not settle on it; they sat right beside it. After the second night they didn't roost near their old nest, although they were seen about the yard for several weeks.

#### ON THE FALL KINGBIRD MIGRATION

I have witnessed many fall flights of the Kingbird, but none quite as complete as during the fall of 1949. Very early on the morning of August 25, I saw the start of the fall flight. For the next five hours I stayed out to watch the event. The Kingbirds usually flew over in family or two-family groups, but quite often a loose flock went over; these contained from 40 to nearly 100 birds. During the course of the morning many thousands of Kingbirds flew over in a general southwesterly direction.

The flight of the Kingbird in fall migration has been described in the literature many times, but no mention is made of the actual feeding habits of the species while in migration. Most bird students have noticed that various species of swallows, Chimney Swift, Nighthawk and Franklin's Gull, all break their flight at intervals to gulp down a choice insect morsel. The Kingbirds are different, for their flight is direct, purposeful and they proceed at a good, steady pace—very much unlike the rather dashing, jerky flight which they use while summering with us. In fact, if one doesn't look sharply at distant Kingbirds, they can easily be mistaken for migrating Robins. On only two occasions in all the time I have watched migrating Kingbirds, have I observed them to break flight for an instant to grab at an insect, even one that almost hit them head-on. The Kingbird apparently makes long flights before breaking ranks to feed, and then resumes its flight to Panama, where this species winters.

It is also apparent that the Kingbirds leave their nesting areas in a body and make their flight out of the country with no delay. Other species often linger for weeks as they pass through the Middlewest, but not so with the Kingbird. From August 26 to 31 we did not see a single Kingbird in this area. On the later date, while making a 300-mile drive through northwest Iowa, we saw only three Kingbirds on the entire trip. This shows quite conclusively that the species leaves in a group, with only a few stragglers remaining. Extremely cold weather occurred in northwest Iowa in August, 1949, with temperatures down to freezing. This probably accounted for the earlier-than-usual departure of the Kingbirds, as wanderers usually are found during the first two weeks of September.



## CATALPA TREE AS A SOURCE OF BIRD FOOD

Several years ago the late Dr. T. C. Stephens published a note in "Iowa Bird Life" on the catalpa seed as a food of the Rose-breasted Grosbeak. This article led me to observe the catalpa tree more closely. It is not unusual to find Downy Woodpeckers pounding away at the long pendant seed pods during the long winters. They no doubt extract many larvae. Baltimore Orioles are occasionally seen pecking into the partially open ends of the seed pods. Close watch with binoculars will show that they are pulling out small worms. During April, 1949, a flock of Purple Finches stayed in the neighborhood for several weeks. Although they fed mostly in a white ash tree and on the ground under it, they were also seen feeding under a catalpa tree. Close observation revealed that they were busily shucking the thin flat catalpa seeds which had fallen from the seed pods and covered the ground. The Cardinal also readily partakes of the seed of the catalpa. On many occasions it has been seen to separate the twin-lobed catalpa seed from its silky sheath and eat it with gusto. Their favorite feeding place is under the mulberry hedge. They are safe here and little windrows of the seeds are often piled up by the winter winds for their convenience.

## FLICKERS VERSUS CATBIRDS

During the late summer of 1949, we enjoyed a friendly battle for possession of a dogwood tree, between a family of Flickers and a family of Catbirds. The Catbirds were not too choosy and would feed on the red fruit of nearby pink honeysuckle, but when the flickers were not around they would move over into the dogwood and eat the ripening fruit there.

Several Flickers would arrive at once, and with much clumsy flopping would finally find perches on the slender branches then proceed to stuff themselves on the milky berries. The commotion was always too much for the Catbirds, which retired to the honeysuckles to feed, or to the ground where they gleaned the fallen dogwood berries constantly dropping from the agitation above. On only two occasions did I actually see the Flickers alight in the honeysuckles and eat a berry or two; they wanted only the dogwood berries. The final result was, the flickers cleaned all the fruit from the dogwood tree and left the yard. The Catbirds stayed around for a month or more and fed on the honeysuckle berries. The catbirds fared equally well on either berry, but the Flickers cared for only the dogwood berries. When the dogwoods were gone they moved to other sources of food.

## THE FALL MEETING AT LEDGES STATE PARK

On Sunday, September 24, Iowa Ornithologists' Union members and their friends were entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Myrle L. Jones, in Ledges State Park, near Boone. The occasion was the fourth fall meeting of our Union, although as in the past it was an informal get-together of old friends and bird students. No one had a large bird list, but everyone had a fine day of visiting and roaming through the park.

It was a beautiful fall day, following a clear, cool night with a heavy frost. Guests began arriving at the Jones home in early forenoon and most of them were there by noon. Nine had come the night before. One member, Dr. Christensen of Spencer, came by airplane.

Park Custodian Jones provided tables on the front lawn, where an unusually fine cooperative luncheon was made up from the various baskets brought by members. Mashed potatoes, creamed chicken and coffee, furnished by Mrs. Jones, supplemented the meal.

Although 7,000 to 9,000 people were in the Ledges park that day, our meeting at the custodian's residence was well separated from the crowds. Trips were made to the historic Kate Shelley Railroad Bridge near the ghost town

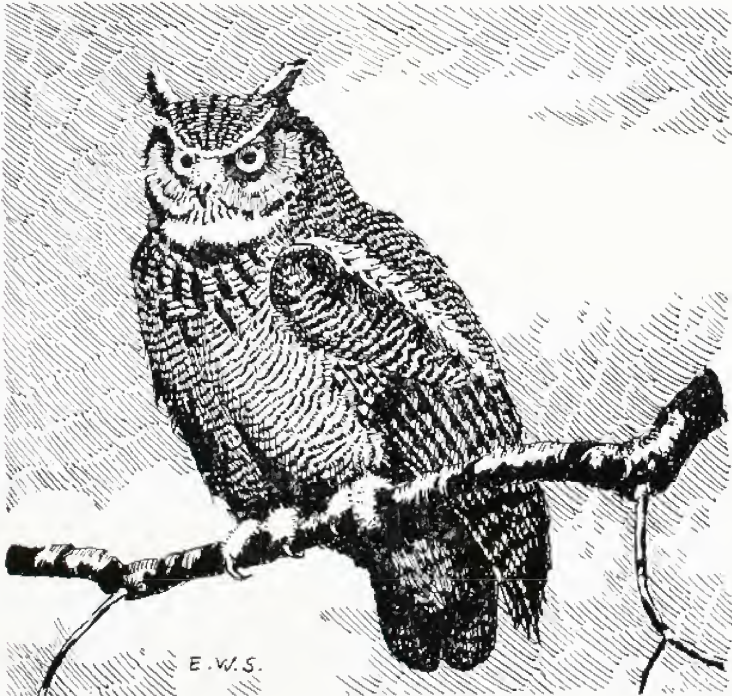
of Moingona, and in the afternoon a long drive was taken through the rolling, wooded country surrounding the Ledges. It was a scenic drive, for the trees were assuming their fall colors.

Myrle, well known as an enthusiastic bird-bander, was running his bird traps, and many members enjoyed a first-hand look at the traps, water-sets and Myrle's banding methods. During the day he banded Catbirds, Indigo Buntings, Chickadees and an Orange-crowned Warbler. The last bird was a good subject for identification. Several names for it were suggested, until the identifying clues were pointed out.

The evening lunch was eaten on the Jones lawn, while a little official business was transacted. The site of the spring convention was discussed, with Spirit Lake tentatively chosen as a meeting place. Mr. and Mrs. John Paul Moore invited the Union to Newton for the fall meeting in 1951. It was voted to accept this invitation.

With the approach of darkness, the group of bird lovers began wending their way over the hills of the Ledges and out onto the broader highways which led to homes in widely separated sections of Iowa. We appreciated the amount of work Mr. and Mrs. Jones did in order to entertain us. This was one of our finest fall meetings—fourth in the series of fall meetings that now seem to be established as part of the activities of our organization.—F. J. P.

**Attendance Register.**—AMES, Mrs. Floyd Andre, Jacqueline Andre, Grace Augustine, Betty Cruzen, Dr. Paul Errington, Julia Faltinson, Dr. and Mrs. Geo. Hendrickson, Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Kozicky, Sara and Frankie Kozicky, Mr. and Mrs. Sellers, Betty Smith, Margherita



GREAT HORNED OWL  
From a drawing by E. W. Steffen



Tarr; BOONE, Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Jones, Barbara, Charles and Loren Jones; DES MOINES, Dorothy Anderson, Mr. and Mrs. Albert C. Berkowitz, Abby and Etta Berkowitz, Mrs. A. J. Binsfeld, Mr. and Mrs. Woodward Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Jos. Chamberlain, Mr. and Mrs. Lester Haskell, Olivia McCabe, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Musgrove, Jean Musgrove, Estella Reynolds, Irene M. Smith, Mrs. Toni Wendelburg; DIAGONAL, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Turnbull; FARLEY, Mr. and Mrs. George Crossley; LAMONI, Mr. and Mrs. Wallace DeLong; MCGREGOR, O. P. Allert; MT. PLEASANT, David L. Savage; MT. VERNON, Dr. and Mrs. Harold Ennis, David Ennis; NEWTON, Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Moore, Ivan, Larry and Sammy Moore, Lucille Moore; OGDEN, Jim Keenan; OSKALOOSA, Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Partridge, Gene and Sue Partridge; PRINCETON, Mr. and Mrs. James Clemons, Norvall Clemons; SPENCER, Dr. E. D. Christensen; SPIRIT LAKE, Dr. and Mrs. F. L. R. Roberts; TAMA, Mrs. J. G. Ennis, Mrs. W. G. MacMartin; WATERLOO, Dr. Myrle Burk, Mrs. Geo. Burk, Lynn Burk, Pearl Rader, John Schmidt, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Schmidt, Jo Ann Schmidt; WINTHROP, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Pierce, Mrs. J. M. Pierce; WOODWARD, Richard Guthrie; GUILFORD COLLEGE, N. C., Willie N. Hunter. Total registered, 85.

#### GENERAL NOTES

**Avocet and Other Birds in the Davenport Region.**—In my report of the 1950 annual meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union at Davenport (last issue, pages 42-48), the list of birds observed on the field trip included only those of Sunday, May 14. It seems advisable, for matter of record, to report an observation that a group of us were fortunate in making on the Saturday morning trip, May 13.

On one of the ponds near McCausland we watched an Avocet for more than a half hour. The bird at all times was a short distance from us, and correct identification could be made without binoculars or telescopes, although we used them in order to get more detailed study of this striking bird. Its feeding activities were of particular interest. When it flew to a more advantageous spot (for us), we noted its flight pattern and heard its call. The Avocet was not seen the next day. It had been reported on the pond for several previous days. On this trip Dr. Robert Vane saw the Baird's Sandpiper. Myra Willis saw the Cerulean Warbler.

The Least Bittern, Upland Plover, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Bewick's Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Lincoln's Sparrow and several other species were observed on May 13 but were not seen May 14. The total list for May 13 was 153 species.—LILLIAN SERBOUSEK, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

**Townsend's Warbler at Davenport.**—A Townsend's Warbler (*Dendroica townsendi*) was observed by Thomas Morrissey and me on Sunday, May 7, 1950, in a ravine at Fejuvary Park, Davenport. Two days previous there had been wind of gale proportions throughout a good bit of the state, coming in from the southwest, and this was probably responsible for the presence of this western species. We were able to watch it in full sunlight through good binoculars for almost ten minutes as it worked through the upper branches of the small trees of the ravine. Lack of a gun and it being Sunday and a city park made collecting out of the question, but the distinctive face pattern, the combination of black crown and striped sides made identification certain. I had seen the bird previously in the southwest.

In a similar ravine in a residential section of the same part of the city a few days before I had observed a Hooded Warbler (*Wilsonia citrina*). It stayed in full view in the open for over a half hour. I have heard that this southern warbler was observed in many places to the north of its ordinary range this spring, but have seen no other records to date.—THOMAS J. FEENEY, Davenport, Iowa.

**Grinnell's Water-thrush in Midsummer.**—Last year I reported seeing three Water-thrushes on Walnut Creek on July 17 (Iowa Bird Life, XIX, p. 56). On July 30, 1949, I saw one in the same vicinity. On June 25, 1950, I found one but was unable to tell the species. On July 16, I again saw one, which I identified as the Grinnell's. It would appear that they are again nesting here. On July 2 Albert Berkowitz and I saw a Solitary Sandpiper just west of Johnson Station in Polk County. This is another species that frequently is seen in Iowa in early summer, though there are no reports of nesting—WOODWARD BROWN, Des Moines, Iowa.

**Nesting Bewick's Wren near Iowa City.**—We often visited a nearby farm where we had been hearing a Bewick's Wren near the machine-shed in the farm yard. We made a search and found the nest in a combine. The nest was in the front section which runs along the ground in the grain. There was a hole in the side which the bird used for entry, but fortunately for us the back was open so we could see and photograph the nest.

Here is our record (1950) for the nest: May 30, nest without eggs; June 4, four eggs in the nest; June 11, incubating six eggs; June 21, young in nest; June 25, photos taken of nest and young; July 2, young left nest; July 4, young in trees near by.

Tom had a hard time getting pictures as the bird was quite suspicious—apparently of the camera. We expected to have an easy time as there was so much traffic at the scene. He even put up a blind in the shadows of the shed. We think the bird became frightened when we took our first picture. She was on the nest and the flash bulb exploded with a loud report which really startled her. Apparently the male disappeared shortly after the birds hatched as we saw no more of him. The female was quite busy feeding the six young and watching the farm cats which prowled near by.—FRED W. KENT, Iowa City, Iowa.



BEWICK'S WREN

Left view shows Tom Kent reaching down into nesting compartment in the combine. Right picture shows adult bird and young at the nest. Photographs by Fred W. and Tom Kent.



**Migrant Shrike Attacks Robin.**—On March 19, 1950, while I was disking a field, I saw a Migrant Shrike attack a female Robin. The day was cold and blustery, and as the field lay in the shelter of timber, several hundred Bronzed Grackles and Robins were working over the freshly-turned earth. The attack was made in three sallies, and from all appearances would have been an easy victory for the shrike. After each sally the shrike flew off, made a complete circle to continue the attack, and landed, hawk-like, on the Robin. During the attack the Robin moved about 50 feet, but there was no hesitation on the part of the shrike as to which was its victim among the many feeding near by. As the shrike came in the third time I was bending over the stunned Robin. My presence was ignored as it came in, and I attempted to capture it but succeeded in getting only its tail feathers. The loss of its tail did not discourage it, however, as it perched on a cornstalk 100 feet away as if waiting for me to leave the scene. I drove it away with clods of dirt.—O. P. ALLERT, McGregor, Iowa.

**Observations in Southwest Iowa.**—My daughter Jean and I were very much interested in the report of the Davenport bird trip of May 14, as we had kept our list of May 13, made at Forney's Lake and Waubonsie, in extreme southwest Iowa. Our list of 88 species was made from the car. Many of the birds recorded at Davenport we had seen previously, but not on the 13th. Our additions to the Davenport list were: Avocet (3 on flooded fields), Franklin's Gull, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Snow and Blue Geese (flock of more than 500), Pelican, Baldpate, Brewer's Blackbird, Bell's Vireo, Hudsonian Godwit (25 on flooded fields), Arkansas Kingbird, Krider's Hawk, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Summer Tanager, Turkey Vulture.

Our first Hudsonian Godwits (3) we saw near Shenandoah on a small pond, April 20, 1950. From that time we saw them in various places until May 13, the date of largest number seen. On May 11 a Mockingbird flew to the ground beside our car, parked in Shenandoah. This was our only record, though I was told that Mockingbirds nested here two or three years ago. On May 15 we saw several Worm-eating Warblers, a species I had seen only once before.—MRS. ROBERT I. BORDNER, Shenandoah, Iowa.

**On the Relative Abundance of Cuckoos.**—One of the many questions which present themselves to the observer in the field is the difference in the frequency with which birds of similar appearance and food habits are encountered. A conspicuous example is furnished by the Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoos.

Reference to the literature brings out the fact that most ornithologists consider the two species of cuckoos almost identical in haunts, habits and movements, and their general appearance is very similar also. Hausman asserts that the Black-billed is more a bird of the damp lowlands. Bent, in his "Life Histories", comments: "In appearance and habits our two cuckoos are very much alike, and the haunts are similar; both are often found together, or in similar places, though the Black-billed is rather more of a woodland bird."

The breeding range of the Yellow-billed extends farther south than that of the Black-billed, but this does not account for the uneven distribution in the middle of their respective ranges. In Kansas, according to Goodrich, the Black-billed is considered much less common. Roberts found, in Minnesota, that "locally the Yellow-billed may be the more common, especially in the southern part of the state, but generally is considerably outnumbered by the Black-billed." Anderson, referring to the Iowa distribution, said that in some localities the Black-billed appeared to be less common, while in others it was more abundant. Both species were described by DuMont in "Birds of Polk County" as fairly common summer residents.

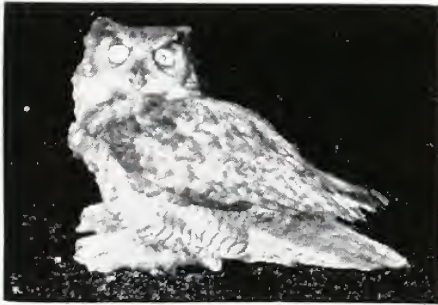


Neither species appears to reach the Des Moines area in any numbers in time to be counted in the spring censuses. In May, 1945, one Yellow-billed was reported; in the June nesting census the same year three Yellow-billed and one Black-billed were recorded. In the 1949 May census, seven Yellow-billed were reported from four areas; no Black-billed were seen.

In 31 trips between May 29 and September 17, 1949, in Ashworth and Waterworks Parks in Des Moines, which comprise a variety of habitats, the Black-billed was observed but once. The Yellow-billed were observed on 18 occasions, from one to three being seen. The average was 1.5 per trip. What reason can be ascribed for the scarcity of the Black-billed?—WOODWARD BROWN, Des Moines, Iowa.

**A Great Horned Owl in Trouble.**—On July 25, 1950, while fishing on Pine Creek in Buchanan County, in company with Robert Cleary, I heard the rattle of a chain in the trees nearby. I discovered a Great Horned Owl with a steel trap on its foot. It had a hard time flying. As it tried to fly away, the weight of the trap brought it near the ground and the trap chain caught

on a wire fence. I ran to the fence, grabbed the chain, and stunned the owl with a stick. We took the trap off its foot, put the bird in a sack and brought it back to Winthrop.



That evening it was taken to Buffalo Creek east of town and released. My sympathies were with the owl in spite of the bad reputation of the species. I put the owl on the ground and took the accompanying flashlight photo of it. In a moment it took to the air, and though it was

very thin and apparently rather weak, it flew down the road about 20 rods and lit in a tree. There it hung, upside down with one foot clutching a limb and the other too weak to keep it in an upright position. It looked comical in this situation. We shook the limb and it flew again, this time alighting in a slough some distance away. A group of Red-winged Blackbirds spotted it at once and set up a great cry. Almost dark now, we drove home and hoped that the owl would be able to survive in the new location.—PAUL PIERCE, Winthrop, Iowa.

**Another Unusual Flight of Warblers in Western Iowa.**—The first unusual warbler flight from this area was reported by the late Dr. T. C. Stephens in 1913; it was given in a fine write-up in the "Wilson Bulletin" for December, 1913. During the intervening years there were no noteworthy warbler migrations until the writer watched another heavy flight during the spring of 1930. This report was later published in the "Wilson Bulletin" for March 1931. It is most interesting to compare the two previous articles with the present effort, as apparently the status of the warbler host has been the least unchanged by the progress of man during this modern age. Many of the larger birds have become extinct and many of the shore birds and game birds are fighting a losing battle with man's modern machines; but not so with the warblers, which over a 40-year period seem to be holding their own pretty well.

The spring of 1950 will go down in history as a spring of low temperature, late snow and floods, all of which held back the migration of small birds.

The first small flight of warblers appeared on May 9 and 10. The next flight came between May 15 to 17. It was so poor that the writer felt quite defeated because trips were made to both Union County, South Dakota, and Dakota County, Nebraska, and after day-long trips the warbler list was very small. I had just about given up seeing a good flight for 1950 when, on the afternoon of May 20, after a mild rain shower, the wind shifted from the east to the northwest and we found the Sioux City territory alive with a horde of warblers. Many of them were rare and one was entirely new to me, namely the Bay-breasted Warbler.

To people in eastern Iowa, a migration of this kind is a commonplace spring occurrence, but to us folks out here on the Missouri River side of the state, a big warbler migration is something to dream about. Therefore I feel that the following list merits publication. The following brief annotations will more or less be a comparison with Dr. Stephens' 1913 list.

1. Black and White Warbler. A regular migrant through this region; an occasional breeder.

2. Nashville Warbler. A regular spring and fall migrant.

3. Orange-crowned Warbler. A common spring migrant, also sometimes common in fall.

4. Tennessee Warbler. Dr. Stephens' contention that this species was the most abundant migrant and second only to the Yellow Warbler still stands. This year all field trips gave us dozens and even hundreds of these drab looking little songsters. The migration period of this species is still as long as reported back in 1913. I have an early arrival date of May 4, and found a singing male as late as June 16, which must be the extreme.

5. Yellow Warbler. Abundant summer resident.

6. Myrtle Warbler. A regular spring migrant, much more abundant in the fall.

7. Magnolia Warbler. Not a plentiful migrant in this area.

8. Chestnut-sided Warbler. Not a common migrant. We saw one in our backyard this year on May 16.

9. Blackburnian Warbler. We found this rare warbler several times this season, with most of the records right in our own yard.

10. Bay-breasted Warbler. This beautiful warbler must be extremely rare as a migrant in the upper Missouri River Valley, as Dr. Stephens saw only two in his many years of bird work in this area. I had never found the species until May 20, 1950, when we found two males in our own yard and spent half a day watching them feed.

11. Black-poll Warbler. A regular and common spring migrant.

12. Pine Warbler. A sight record of one of these warblers was made on May 17, but is given for what it is worth. I have never seen a specimen taken in this area.

13. Black-throated Green Warbler. This rare warbler was seen and heard several times on May 20 and 21, and again the locale was our own yard. It seems that sometimes one can go far afield and then come home to find the rare specimens in his own yard.

14. Oven-bird. A common migrant and regular summer resident.

15. Water-thrush. The common Water-thrush was again listed, but we have not seen the Louisiana Water-thrush for several years.

16. Mourning Warbler. A regular late migrant, with the average date of arrival about May 20. The loud clear song of this warbler will often lead the observer to the bird.

17. Yellow-throat. The Yellow-throats are common migrants and regular summer residents in western Iowa.

18. Wilson's Warbler. A regular spring migrant, as they have been for the past 40 years.

19. Redstart. A regular spring migrant. Less common in the fall, with September 7, 1949, being the latest fall date. This species is also a summer resident. On May 21, a female Redstart was observed gathering wisps of grapevine bark for a nest while we were working through the McCook Lake woods, Union County, South Dakota.—WM. YOUNGWORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.

**Florida Vacation.**—To see species of birds never before seen and thus add to one's life list is a thrilling experience and one which I enjoy no end. I had a desire for a number of years to visit some good birding areas in Florida. My wish materialized last spring when I was a member of the Audubon Wildlife Tours in that state.

Our first was a two-day tour to areas near Lake Okeechobee and to the prairie country north of it. Much of the birding was done from the station wagon and was under the leadership of Alexander Sprunt, Jr. The birds new to me observed in this area included the Louisiana Heron, Wood, Glossy, and White Ibises, Florida Duck, Audubon's Caracara, Pigeon Hawk, Florida Crane, Limpkin, Laughing Gull, Gull-billed Tern, Black-skimmer, Ground Dove, Fish Crow, Loggerhead Shrike, Prairie Warbler, White-eyed Towhee, Pine Woods Sparrow, and several subspecies such as the Florida Red-shouldered Hawk and Florida Bobwhite which show some color variation from our northern species. I particularly enjoyed hearing the call of the Florida Cranes and watching the Limpkins feed.

Continuing to the Everglades, we visited the Cuthbert Bay Rookery, which is the nesting site of hundreds of ibises, egrets, and herons. The young of some were in the nest and others were flying about. At a pond at which Anhinga Trail terminated I had excellent views of two new birds, the Purple Gallinule and the Great White Heron. It was here that we had interesting studies of four species of white birds—the Great White Heron, American Egret, Snowy Egret, and Little Blue Heron, with White and Wood Ibises flying overhead. The Anhinga put on a good show in consuming a fish it had caught.

Our third tour, the Florida Bay trip, was somewhat disappointing because a very strong wind prevented our group from going by boat to Bottlepoint Key where the Roseate Spoonbills can be seen. However, I did see the Reddish Egret, Gray Kingbird, Swallow-tailed Kite, Royal Tern, and Wilson's Plover on the Keys beyond Tavernier to add to my life list.

One cannot leave Florida without noting some of its other interesting things — its citrus fruit orchards, the many palm trees, mangrove swamps, blooming air plants and other flowers; its alligators and Brahma cattle; the Seminole Indians; the beautiful aqua and pea green-colored water around the Keys, and lastly, the Key lime pie which is a "must" for all visitors to the Keys.—LILLIAN SERBOUSEK, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

**Field Ornithology in Colorado.**—In the summer of 1949, I attended the University of Colorado at Boulder. During the ten weeks I was there, I had opportunity to study the birds on the campus and in the mountains. During the first term I took a course called Field Ornithology with Dr. Gordon Alexander as the instructor. The course consisted of four days of lecture and a field trip every Saturday.

On July 16, we went on an all-day field trip into the mountains to study the birds of high altitudes. At Boulder Falls, a short distance up Boulder Canyon, we found the Dipper diving under the water for insects and working its way over the rocks of the fast mountain stream. Dr. Alexander explained that for several years he had found a pair nesting behind Boulder



Falls, where they had to go through a curtain of falling water to reach their nest.

At Red Rock Lake, we found Ruby-crowned Kinglets nesting and heard them singing. The Hermit Thrush was also a nesting bird there. Taking a little trail that I found leading off into the pines, I found an Audubon Warbler hopping along on the ground. Dr. Alexander said that during migration both Myrtle and Audubon Warblers are found at the same time on the campus of the University. Pileolated Warblers which resemble our Wilson's Warbler were very common there.

On the shore of Brainerd Lake, we ate our lunch and then climbed the trail which leads to Mt. Audubon. The ground under foot was wet from recently melted snow, and Lincoln's Sparrows were at home nesting in the low bushes of this damp terrain. A White-crowned Sparrow was trying to conceal a baby sparrow in a bush. The boys in the class tried to catch it. It flew directly into my hands, but I could not hold on to it. On the trail through the tall, silent pines that leads to Mt. Audubon, we found Rocky Mountain Jays and Clark's Nutcrackers.

On the campus, I discovered a Black-headed Grosbeak nesting behind the dormitory where I stayed. I heard the male bird singing and when I found him he was sitting on the nest. A Solitary Vireo had a nest in a tree to the north of Hale Science Hall. Had I seen the same bird in Iowa, I would have called it the Blue-headed Vireo. One day, I was looking out the window of my room when I saw a small, turquoise-blue, finch-like bird with a cinnamon band across its breast and sides, and with a white belly and wing bars. It was a Lazuli Bunting. Near it was an Arkansas Goldfinch.

The House Finches or Linnets nested in the vines that grew up on the sides of the dormitory and their beautiful song awakened us early in the morning. I remember my first morning there when I heard a new song. Looking out the window, I saw a bird that resembled the Purple Finch but was brighter red and not so rose-colored. Taking a walk that afternoon around the campus, I met a visiting English professor from the University of Toledo, George Orians, who had his binoculars focused on one of these House Finches.

Other interesting birds I learned on the field trips we took were Spotted Towhee, Bullock's Oriole, Western Tanager, Say's Phoebe, and Lewis's Woodpecker. Avocets, Brewster's Egret, and a colony of nesting Blue Herons were the most interesting water birds that I observed.

During the second term, on one of the University trips through Rocky Mountain National Park, they gave us 15 minutes to explore Bear Lake near Estes Park. On the south end of the lake as I was following a path through the pines, I found a Pine Grosbeak feeding three young birds on the ground. They were very tame and curious and came so near me I could have touched them with my foot. The sound of the horn told me that my time was up, and I reluctantly hurried back to the bus.

The most interesting experience I had during the whole summer was on August 25. Walking toward the dormitory, I looked up and saw a spruce tree near Mackey Auditorium full of chunky, yellow birds with large, whitish bills. I counted 36 on the ground and in the trees. They were Evening Grosbeaks, feeding on cones on the trees and on the ground. I have read in "Iowa Bird Life" about people seeing them in Iowa in winter, but this was my first experience with either Pine Grosbeaks or Evening Grosbeaks.

During the ten weeks in Colorado I found 26 birds that were new to me.  
—MRS. W. C. DeLONG, Lamoni, Iowa.

**Kentucky Bibliography.**—Harvey B. Lovell and Mabel Slack have compiled a very useful "Bibliography of Kentucky Ornithology". It is a book of 50 pages, with 2 maps, and bound in paper wrappers. Kentucky has had an unusually interesting background of ornithological effort, for between 1793 and 1820 some of the most famous naturalists, including Audubon and Wilson, visited the state and studied its bird life. There is a fine chapter on ornithological history traced through the years, followed by 34 pages of bibliographical citations. The book sells for \$1.00 and copies may be obtained from Professor Lovell, University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky. —F.J.P.

#### MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Steffen of Cedar Rapids enjoyed a vacation trip through New England and the eastern states during the summer. They went as far as Acadia National Park on the coast of Maine, and crossed Ontario. They reported seeing beautiful scenery on much of the trip, but found bird life not at all plentiful.

Dr. and Mrs. F. L. R. Roberts of Spirit Lake returned to their Iowa home in August after having spent about eight months traveling. They covered about 21,000 miles in 30 states, and made up a list of 215 species of birds, of which 40 were new to their life lists. In late September they moved from Iowa to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where the doctor began practice in the government hospital on the reservation. Due to impaired health, he had been forced to give up medical practice for the past two years. Travel and rest brought recovery and now he is able to work on a somewhat limited schedule, in the hospital, clinic and schools. We are sorry to lose Dr. and Mrs. Roberts as Iowa members, for they have been active over a long period of years, but we wish them the best of everything in their new location.

#### FIVE-YEAR INDEX IN DECEMBER ISSUE

There will not be a regular December issue. The next issue will be devoted entirely to the five-year index to "Iowa Bird Life." This year completes the 20th year of our magazine, and has been done in the past, the final issue in the five-year span will be given over to the cumulative index. A title page will also be furnished for those who bind their magazines. We find that an increasing number of members are binding their copies into convenient five-year books. These books provide the finest reference material on Iowa birds that can be found anywhere and become increasingly valuable as the years pass.

Members should complete their sets of "Iowa Bird Life" as soon as possible as we are very low on certain issues.

Although the work of indexing "Iowa Bird Life" for 1946-50 is almost completed, the index number will probably be late. Setting the type is not a small job for the printer, and the proof has to be carefully checked against the original references in the magazine. The next issue may not be published until early in 1951.

The Christmas bird census will be taken as usual between December 20 and 30. Study the form of censuses published in previous March issues and follow details carefully. List the birds in the A. O. U. order, giving exact number seen, and include data on hours, weather and ground conditions. Send your list to the Editor of "Iowa Bird Life" not later than January 15. This is the closing date on our tabulation of censuses and lists received after that cannot be included.